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With overdoses up, states look at harsher fentanyl penalties

By G. STERN/J. POLLARD and
GEOFF MULVIHILL
Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — State lawmakers nationwide are responding to the deadliest overdose crisis in U.S. history by pushing harsher penalties for possessing fentanyl and other powerful lab-made opioids that are connected to about 70,000 deaths a year.

Imposing longer prison sentences for possessing smaller amounts of drugs represents a shift in states that in recent years have rolled back drug possession penalties. Proponents of tougher penalties say this crisis is different and that, in most places, the stiffer sentences are intended to punish drug dealers, not just users.

"There is no other drug — no other illicit drug — that has the same type of effects on our communities," said Mark Jackson, the district attorney for Douglas County, Nevada, and president of the Nevada District Attorneys Association, which is pushing for stricter penalties for fentanyl-related crimes.



South Carolina House lawmakers celebrate the passage of a bill establishing criminal penalties for trafficking in fentanyl on Feb. 1, 2023 in Columbia, S.C.

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Associated Press

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With overdoses up, states look at harsher fentanyl penalties

Continued from Front

But the strategy is alarming recovery advocates who say focusing on the criminal angle of drugs has historically backfired, including when lawmakers elevated crack cocaine penalties in the 1980s.

"Every time we treat drugs as a law enforcement problem and push stricter laws, we find that we punish people in ways that destroy their lives and make it harder for them to recover later on," said Adam Wandt, an assistant professor of public policy at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. He said people behind bars often continue getting drugs — often without receiving quality addiction treatment — then emerge to find it's harder to get work.

Since 2020, drug overdoses are now linked to more than 100,000 deaths a year nationally, with about two-thirds of them fentanyl-related. That's more than 10 times as many drug deaths as in 1988, at the height of the crack epidemic.



People whose family members have died from fentanyl overdose stand at a committee meeting on Jan. 19, 2023, in Columbia, S.C.

Fentanyl mostly arrives in the U.S. from Mexico and is mixed into supplies of other drugs, including cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and counterfeit oxycodone pills. Some users seek it out. Others don't know they're taking it.

Ingesting 2 milligrams of fentanyl can be fatal,

meaning 1 gram — about the same as a paper clip — could contain 500 lethal doses.

That's what's driving some lawmakers to crack down with harsh penalties, along with adopting measures such as legalizing materials to test drug supplies for fentanyl and distributing naloxone, a drug that can reverse overdoses.

Before this year's legislative sessions began, a dozen states had already adopted fentanyl possession measures, according to tracking by the National

Conference of State Legislatures.

And in this year, in one legislative chamber of liberal Oregon and one chamber of conservative West Virginia, lawmakers have agreed upon tougher penalties. In her State of the State speech this March, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey, a Republican, called on lawmakers to adopt a drug trafficking bill that includes tougher fentanyl sentences.

In Nevada, where Democrats control the Legislature, a bill backed by

Democratic Attorney General Aaron Ford would give one to 20 years in prison for selling, possessing, manufacturing or transporting 4 grams or more of fentanyl into the state, depending on the amount. It's a change for Ford, who has supported criminal justice reforms including a sweeping 2019 law that, among other provisions, raised the threshold for such penalties to 100 grams. It would also remove fentanyl from the state's "Good Samaritan" law, which exempts people from criminal drug possession charges while reporting an overdose.

"What we've learned is that lowering the thresholds for all drugs was overinclusive," Ford said.

Harm reduction advocates are pushing Ford and others to rethink their support, arguing the thresholds for longer penalties can sweep up low-level users — not just the dealers the law is aimed at — as well as some who may not even know they are taking fentanyl. They warn that the state's crime labs test only for the presence of fentanyl, not the exact amount in a mixture of drugs. Thus, people with over 4 grams of drugs containing a few milligrams of fentanyl could be subject to trafficking penalties, they say. □

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Biden issues first veto, taking on new Republican Congress

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **SEUNG MIN KIM**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden issued the first veto of his presidency Monday in an early sign of shifting White House relations with the new Congress since Republicans took control in January. He's seeking to kill a Republican measure that bans the government from considering environmental impacts or potential lawsuits when making investment decisions for Americans' retirement plans. It's just the latest manifestation of the new relationship,

and Biden is gearing up for even bigger fights with Republicans on government spending and raising the nation's debt limit in the next few months.

The measure vetoed by Biden ended a Trump-era ban on federal managers of retirement plans considering factors such as climate change, social impacts or pending lawsuits when making investment choices.

Because suits and climate change have financial repercussions, administration officials argue that the investment limits are courting possible disaster.

Critics say environmental, social and governance (ESG) investments allocate money based on political agendas, such as a drive against climate change, rather than on earning the best returns for savers. Republicans in Congress who pushed the measure to overturn the Labor Department's action argue ESG is just the latest example of the world trying to get "woke."

Biden, in a video released by the White House, said he vetoed the measure because it "put at risk the retirement savings of individuals across the country." □

WH economic report: Money for child care would help growth

By JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is making the case for more government support for child care programs in an economic report being released Monday, drawing on extensive research to say additional spending would improve kids' lives, increase the quality of early childhood schooling and enable more women to hold jobs. The analysis dovetails with President Joe Biden's political messaging as ideological lines are being drawn for the 2024 election. Democrats have sought to put a greater focus on Republican lawmakers who have restricted access to abortions in the wake of last year's Supreme Court decision and called for mandating that impoverished parents be employed in order to receive government aid.

The administration is also making a fuller case that its policies on children and families are better for overall economic growth, not just in terms of social fairness. The White House Council of Economic Advisers put together the 28-page analysis on child care as part of its broader annual economic report of the president. The report is typically a summary of trends,



Council of Economic Advisers Chair Cecilia Rouse, right, accompanied by White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, left, and Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young, center, speaks at a press briefing at the White House in Washington, Friday, March 10, 2023.

policy victories and challenges in the U.S. economy. "The president's approach is that we need to be investing in our children, because we know that pays for itself multiple times over," said Cecilia Rouse, chair of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Rouse added that government support for child care would help ensure a "robust labor force" because parents are often prevented from working due to its costs. Child care expenses can overwhelm their earn-

ings, meaning that parents are better off staying unemployed or working part-time even if doing so can diminish their long-term earning potential. This reflects a problem in the U.S. economy that the private sector has been unable to fix on its own, leading to the Biden administration's push for greater government involvement.

The analysis draws on studies showing that each dollar invested in early childhood education can produce a return of \$7 to \$12,

if not more. The spending increases the likelihood of kids staying in school and staying employed as adults, which helps to boost economic growth, reduce crime and eventually lower their reliance on government programs. A recent study cited in the analysis shows that the benefits are intergenerational and extend to the children of those who received child care. The analysis also addresses the market failures with child care in the U.S. Not only is it expensive,

but workers at child care centers are often paid so poorly that many of them leave their jobs and cause a shortage of available support. The latest Labor Department data shows that child care workers earn \$17.95 an hour, about 36% less than the average non-supervisory worker in the U.S. economy.

This analysis recommends greater government funding to make child care more affordable for families and also to raise the pay of workers in that sector, which would help to improve the quality of the care. Many Republicans are skeptical about the benefits of more government aid for child care, which they have criticized for being part of a cultural agenda instead of a financial one.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., has argued that deficit reduction would be the better policy choice because it could help families by lowering inflation. When the Commerce Department recently announced that large computer chip manufacturers needed to offer affordable child care as part of receiving government aid, some Republican senators accused the Biden administration of social engineering. □

Associated Press

Last wild Atlantic salmon can survive Maine dams, feds say

By PATRICK WHITTLE

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The federal government ruled Monday that the last wild Atlantic salmon in the country can coexist with hydroelectric dams on a Maine river, dealing a blow to environmentalists who have long sought to remove the dams.

The salmon, once abundant in the U.S., now return to only a few Maine rivers. One is the Kennebec River, dammed by Brookfield Renewable Energy Partners. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

said Monday that the dams are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the salmon if conservation measures are taken.

Conservation measures along Brookfield's four Kennebec dams are designed to improve fish passages and will require an investment of more than \$100 million by Brookfield, NOAA said.

The dam upgrades would allow the salmon to swim up the Kennebec from the Atlantic Ocean to freshwater inland habitats for the first time since the construction of the dams in the 19th

century, the agency said. The agency reviewed the dams because Brookfield is seeking to relicense one of them and amend the licenses for three others, said NOAA spokesperson Allison Ferreira. NOAA said in a statement that it will "oversee an extensive monitoring program to ensure that the dams meet the expectations of improved fish passage in the Kennebec River."

NOAA's opinion "is an important milestone in ensuring that these facilities can continue to support Maine's clean energy fu-



The Weston Dam holds back the Kennebec River on Sept. 14, 2021, in Skowhegan, Maine.

Associated Press

ture and traditional industries along the lower Kennebec River," said David Heidrich, a spokesperson for Brookfield.

However, environmental groups said the dams

threaten extinction of the salmon, and NOAA's ruling is shortsighted.

They also said the dams endanger other vulnerable species of fish, such as sturgeon. □

Idaho poised to allow firing-squad executions in some cases

By **REBECCA BOONE**

Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho is poised to allow firing squads to execute condemned inmates when the state can't get lethal-injection drugs, under a bill the Legislature passed Monday with a veto-proof majority. Firing squads will be used only if the state cannot obtain the drugs needed for lethal injections — and one death row inmate has already had his scheduled execution postponed multiple times because of drug scarcity.

Idaho previously had a firing squad option on the books but has never used it. The option was removed from state law in 2009 after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a method of lethal injection that was commonly used at the time.

Only Mississippi, Utah, Oklahoma and South Carolina currently have laws allowing firing squads if other execution methods are unavailable, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. A judge has put South Carolina's law on hold until a lawsuit challenging the method is resolved.

Gov. Brad Little, a Republi-



The execution chamber at the Idaho Maximum Security Institution is shown as Security Institution Warden Randy Blades look on in Boise, Idaho on Oct. 20, 2011.

Associated Press

can, has voiced his support for the death penalty but generally does not comment on legislation before he signs or vetoes it.

Sen. Doug Ricks, a Republican who co-sponsored the bill, told his fellow senators on Monday that the state's difficulty in finding lethal injection drugs could continue "indefinitely" and that he believes death by firing

squad is "humane."

"This is a rule of law issue our criminal system should work and penalties should be exacted," Ricks said.

But Sen. Dan Foreman, also a Republican, said firing-squad executions would traumatize the people who carry them out, the people who witness them and the people who clean up afterward.

"I've seen the aftermath of shootings, and it's psychologically damaging to anybody who witnesses it," Foreman said. "The use of the firing squad is, in my opinion, beneath the dignity of the state of Idaho." The bill originated with Republican Rep. Bruce Skaug, prompted in part by the state's inability to execute Gerald Pizzuto Jr. late last year. Pizzuto, who now has terminal cancer and other debilitating illnesses, has spent more than three decades on death row for his role in the 1985 slayings of two gold prospectors.

The Idaho Department of Correction estimates that it will cost around \$750,000 to build or retrofit a death chamber for firing squad executions.

Idaho Department of Correction Director Jeff Tewalt last year told lawmakers there would likely be as many legal challenges to planned firing squad executions as there are to lethal injections. At the time, he said he would be reluctant to ask his staffers to participate in a firing squad.

"I don't feel, as the director of the Idaho Department of Correction, the compulsion

to ask my staff to do that," Tewalt said.

Both Tewalt and his former co-worker Kevin Kempf played a key role in obtaining the drugs used in the 2012 execution of Richard Albert Leavitt, flying to Tacoma, Washington, with more than \$15,000 in cash to buying them from a pharmacist. The trip was carefully kept secret by the department but revealed in court documents after University of Idaho professor Aliza Cover sued for the information under a public records act.

Kempf was promoted to lead the Idaho Department of Correction two years later but now is the executive director of the Correctional Leaders Association. He said the execution process is always challenging for all involved, including the family members of victims. Those challenges could be amplified in firing squad executions, he said.

"I've got to say at the same time, my thoughts go to staff members that may have to carry out something, per law, that looks like putting someone to death," Kempf told the AP during a phone interview earlier this month. □



In this undated photo provided by Aurora Police Department is James Craig.

Associated Press

By **COLLEEN SLEVIN**

Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Investigators say a Colorado dentist intent on killing his wife put poison in her protein shakes before finally succeeding with a rush order dose of potassium cyanide powder he said he needed to

Police: Dentist used rush order cyanide to poison wife

perform surgery. As Angela Craig languished in the hospital with doctors unable to figure out what was wrong with her, police also allege James Craig was meeting with a woman he planned to start a new life with, according to court documents.

Craig, 45, was arrested on suspicion of first-degree murder Sunday, shortly after his wife died after being taken off life support during her third trip to the hospital this month. According to court records, he is being represented by the public defender's office, which does not comment on cases. Craig is scheduled to appear in court Thursday to learn whether prosecutors

have decided to file charges against him.

Police in the Denver suburb of Aurora began investigating Craig after the partner in his dental practice and friend, Ryan Redfearn, told a nurse that Craig had ordered potassium cyanide even though they did not need it for their work, according to an arrest warrant laying out evidence gathered by investigators. Craig had asked an office manager not to open the package but another employee did, leading to its discovery and eventual disclosure to authorities, the document said.

Investigators believe Craig put arsenic in one of the protein shakes he routinely

made for her for their workouts on March 6 and then gave her one with potassium cyanide before she had to go back to the hospital again. The delivery of a third substance he is accused of ordering, Oleanthin, was intercepted by authorities after they began investigating him.

According to the arrest affidavit, Craig told Redfearn that he ordered the potassium cyanide for his wife and told a social worker that she had been suicidal and depressed since he asked for a divorce in December even though neither of the couple's children said anything about suicide attempts.

Redfearn also told investi-

gators that Craig was on the verge of bankruptcy and had been having problems in his marriage. Angela Craig's sister, Toni Kofoed, told police that Craig had drugged his wife about five years ago with an unknown drug because he said he planned to kill himself and did not want her to be able to save him. Kofoed believes that incident is what Craig referenced in a series of texts between Angela and James Craig about her symptoms after she first fell ill on March 6. James Craig wrote: "Given our history I know that must be triggering. Just for the record, I didn't drug you. I am super worried though." □

U.N. commission calls for closing the gender digital divide

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The U.N.'s premiere global body fighting for gender equality on Saturday called for wide-ranging efforts to close the gap between men and women in today's technology-driven world and urged zero tolerance for gender-based violence and harassment online.

In a document approved by consensus after all-night negotiations at the end of a two-week meeting, the Commission on the Status of Women expressed grave concern at the interrelation between offline and online violence, harassment and discrimination against women and girls and it condemned the increase in these acts.

It called for a significant increase in investments by the public and private sector to bridge the gender digital divide. It also called for the removal of barriers to equal access to digital technology for all women and girls, and new policies and programs to achieve gender parity in emerging scientific and technological fields. Sima Bahous, executive director of UN Women, an entity of the



The symbol of the United Nations is displayed outside the Secretariat Building, Feb. 28, 2022, at United Nations Headquarters.

United Nations focusing on gender equality and the empowerment, called the document "game-changing" in promoting a blueprint for a more equal and connected world for women and girls. The challenge now, she said, is for governments, the private sector, civil society and young people to turn the blueprint "into reality for all women and girls."

At the start of the commission's two-week meeting, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said its focus was very timely because women and girls are being left behind as technology races ahead.

"Three billion people are still unconnected to the internet, the majority of them women and girls in developing countries, (and) in least developed countries

just 19% of women are online," Guterres said. "Globally, girls and women make up just one-third of students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics" and men outnumber women two to one in the tech industry.

Bahous told the opening meeting that "the digital divide has become the new face of gender inequality," with 259 million

more men than women online last year. She also cited a survey of female journalists from 125 countries that found three-quarters had experienced online harassment in the course of their work and a third had engaged in self-censorship in response.

The "agreed conclusions" document adopted Saturday by the 45-member commission calls for equal quality education for women and girls in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, information and communications technology, and digital literacy so they can thrive in the rapidly changing world.

During lengthy negotiations on the document, which has 93 paragraphs, U.N. diplomats said language on women's rights was challenged by Russia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Holy See and human rights language was also challenged by those countries as well as Cuba and China. There were also intense debates over language on gender-based violence facilitated by technology, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity because negotiations were closed. □

Associated Press

N. Ireland unionists say no to Sunak's Brexit deal, for now

By **JILL LAWLESS**

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Northern Ireland's main British unionist party said Monday it will vote against a deal struck by Britain and the European Union to resolve a thorny trade dispute that vexed U.K.-EU relations and triggered a political crisis in Belfast. Democratic Unionist Party leader Jeffrey Donaldson said the deal "does not deal with some of the fundamental problems at the heart of our current difficulties" and the party's eight lawmakers would not support it when the House of Commons votes on Wednesday.

The U.K.-EU agreement, known as the Windsor

Framework, aims to ease customs checks and other hurdles for goods moving to Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K. that

were imposed after Brexit to maintain an open border between the north and its EU neighbor the Republic of Ireland. The open border

is a key pillar of Northern Ireland's peace process. Northern Ireland's British unionist politicians strongly opposed the customs border, saying it undermines Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom. The DUP walked out of the power-sharing semi-autonomous Belfast government a year ago in protest, leaving Northern Ireland's 1.9 million people without a functioning administration. The Windsor Framework is designed to ease the burden on businesses and address unionist concerns. It gives Northern Ireland politicians a mechanism, known as the Stormont Brake, to challenge new EU trade rules that could

apply in the region a key unionist demand.

But the DUP is concerned that the mechanism does not go far enough and some elements of EU law will continue to apply in Northern Ireland. Under the deal, Northern Ireland is part of the U.K.'s internal market but also has access to the EU's vast single market of 27 nations for trade in goods.

The DUP decision is a blow to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's deal, but likely not a fatal one. Wednesday's vote, on the Stormont Brake part of the deal, is a chance for lawmakers to express a view, but not essential to the framework being implemented. □



Democratic Unionist Party leader Jeffrey Donaldson pauses as he speaks to the media at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, on May 9, 2022.

Associated Press

Their world was the oyster: Oldest pearl town found in UAE

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

SINIYAH ISLAND, United Arab Emirates (AP) —

Archaeologists said Monday they have found the oldest pearling town in the Persian Gulf on an island off one of the northern sheikhdoms of the United Arab Emirates. Artifacts found in this town on Siniyah Island in Umm al-Quwain, likely once home to thousands of people and hundreds of homes, date as far back as the region's pre-Islamic history in the late 6th century. While older pearling towns have been mentioned in historical texts, this represents the first time archaeologists say they have physically found one from this ancient era across the nations of the Persian Gulf.

"This is the oldest example of that kind of very specifically Khaleeji pearling town," said Timothy Power, an associate professor of archaeology at the United Arab Emirates University, using a word that means "Gulf" in Arabic. "It's the spiritual ancestor of towns like Dubai."

The pearling town sits on Siniyah Island, which shields



Archaeologists and journalists walk past uncovered ruins on Siniyah Island in Umm al-Quwain, United Arab Emirates, Monday, March 20, 2023.

the Khor al-Beida marshlands in Umm al-Quwain, an emirate some 50 kilometers (30 miles) northeast of Dubai along the coast of the Persian Gulf. The island, whose name means "flashing lights" likely due to the effect of the white-hot sun overhead, already has seen archaeologists discover an ancient Christian monastery dating back as many as 1,400 years.

The town sits directly south of that monastery on one of the curling fingers of the island and stretches across some 12 hectares (143,500 square yards). There, archaeologists found a variety of homes made of beach rock and lime mortar, ranging from cramped quarters to more sprawling homes with courtyards, suggesting a social stratification, Power said.

The site also bears signs of year-round habitation, unlike other pearling operations run in seasonal spots in the region. "The houses are crammed in there, cheek by jowl," he added. "The key thing there is permanence. People are living there all year around."

In the homes, archaeologists have discovered loose pearls and diving weights, which the free divers used

to quickly drop down to the seabed while relying only on their held breath.

The town predates the rise of Islam across the Arabian Peninsula, making its residents likely Christians. Islam's Prophet Muhammad was born around 570 and died in 632 after conquering Mecca in present-day Saudi Arabia.

Umm al-Quwain's Department of Tourism and Archaeology, UAE University, the Italian Archaeological Mission in the emirate and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University all took part in the excavation. Umm al-Quwain, the least-populated emirate in the UAE, plans to build a visitor's center at the site.

Today, the area near the marshland is more known for the low-cost liquor store at the emirate's Barracuda Beach Resort.

In recent months, authorities have demolished a hulking, Soviet-era cargo plane linked to a Russian gunrunner known as the "Merchant of Death" as it builds a bridge to Siniyah Island for a \$675 million real estate development. □

Associated Press

Dominican police arrest 19 in high-profile corruption case

By MARTÍN ADAMES AL-CÁNTARA

Associated Press

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) —

Authorities in the Dominican Republic have arrested 19 people in a sweeping

corruption case that accuses a well-known former presidential candidate and three former officials of embezzling nearly \$350 million and illegal campaign financing.

The arrests are the latest in a

string of investigations that officials have launched in the past two years as part of a crackdown on rampant government corruption in the Caribbean country.

Among those detained Saturday night is Gonzalo Castillo, a former public works minister who won 37% of the vote when he ran as presidential candidate for the Dominican Liberation Party in the 2020 general elections won by current President Luis Abinader.

Also arrested is a former treasury minister, Donald Guerrero; former comptroller general, Daniel Omar Caamaño; and former administrative minister to the presidency, José Ramón Peralta.

Prosecutors said they are accused of paying bribes,

laundering assets and illegally financing the previous electoral campaign on an "unprecedented" scale after embezzling \$347 million of government funds.

The suspects were charged after authorities launched 40 raids targeting their properties and businesses in the capital of Santo Domingo and beyond.

Hundreds of Castillo supporters gathered Monday outside the Justice Palace to protest his arrest as they waved the party's purple-and-yellow flag and tried to damage the building before police scattered the crowd with tear gas. Meanwhile, officials with the Dominican Liberation Party questioned the impartiality of prosecutors and accused them of only investigating and arresting

former government officials and not looking into corruption allegations against Abinader's current administration.

"It is clear that behind these actions, there are markedly political and re-election interests," said Charlie Mariotti, the party's secretary general.

Police on Saturday also arrested the former director of the State Sugar Council, Luis Miguel Piccirilo; former director of the National Cadastre, Claudio Silva Peña; and the former directors of Casinos and Gambling, Oscar Chalas Guerrero and Julián Omar Fernández.

Defense attorneys for the accused could not be immediately reached for comment. The suspects were expected to appear in court Monday. □



Presidential primary candidate Gonzalo Castillo, of with the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana political party, arrives to vote during primary elections in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Oct. 6, 2019.

Associated Press



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February's figures are looking good for Aruba



(Oranjestad)— The minister of Tourism, Mr. Dangui Oduber, have just received the results for the month of February 2023 about tourism on Aruba. Aruba has recovered with 105% compared to February 2019. According to the projection set for this year, Aruba will surpass levels from 2019 and the results from January and February of this year have proven just that.

The ministry of the minister is directed towards the management of sustainable tourism, focusing on quality tourists with an annual income of more than \$150k to keep investing in the product Aruba and to make sure to diversify Aruba's tourism.

In the month of February, the results have shown a sublime performance from hotels. The rate tourists have paid for accommodation on the island is the highest that has ever been known in our country. AHATA has just published their results from February 2023, and this has shown that the "average daily rate" per night on Aruba is \$422.92. For comparison, here are the prices from the previous years:

February 2018: \$344.80

February 2019: \$359.81

February 2020: \$367.29

February 2021: \$294.64

February 2022: \$356.69

February 2023: \$422.92

The average daily rate, as well as the REVAP—which are important indicators for measuring quality in tourists—have reached a record level in February 2023. The REVPAR is the price that a tourist is willing to spend for a room a night. The REVPAR from February 2023 is at \$353.45. Compared to 2019, this was at \$330.30. Our country should be happy about the fact that we have the highest REVPAR rate in the Caribbean. The moment you have a REVPAR this high, that is when you know there are quality tourists visiting the island.

Considering the performances from this past month, it can be concluded that not only are quality tourists visiting the island, but hotels are also registering the highest rate in their history. This is all confirmation that the minister management of tourism is giving positive results.

Minister Oduber would like to give thanks to all partners: ATA, AAA, APA, AHATA, ATSA and Aruba vacation rentals for this historic result, without forgetting that the island's biggest asset is its people. □

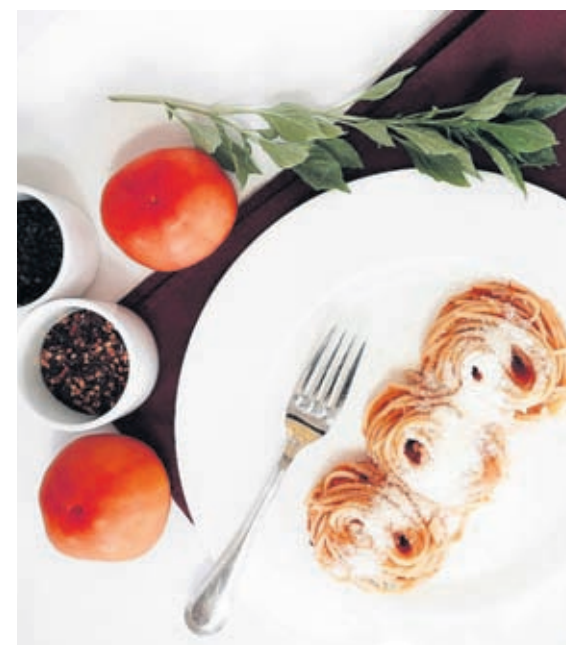
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LOCAL



As part of AUA Airport's corporate strategy and commitment to create more sustainable airport operations: **Aruba Airport receives Airport Carbon Accreditation Level 3**

In Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA)'s vision, goals, and objectives, sustainability is defined as one of the most important strategic pillars of the company. AAA has the ambition to be the most sustainable airport in the region and proudly announces its latest achievement, the Airport Carbon Accreditation Level 3.

In 2018, AUA Airport entered Airports Council International's (ACI) Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) program, which is the only global, airport-specific carbon management certification program for airports. It provides airports with a common framework and assesses and recognizes the efforts of airports to manage and reduce their carbon emissions through 6 levels of certification:

'Mapping', 'Reduction', 'Optimisation', 'Neutrality', 'Transformation' and 'Transition'.

By achieving the Airport Carbon Accreditation Level 3 – Optimisation, AUA Airport engaged its third parties in carbon footprint management and widened the scope of its carbon footprint to include a range of Scope 3 emissions. Third parties include airlines and various service providers, such as independent ground handlers, catering companies, fueling company, and others working on the airport site. Actions taken to measure, manage and reduce its carbon footprint included data collection, inspections, auditing, and calculations of GHG emissions, amongst other efforts.



"We congratulate Aruba for being the first airport in the Eastern Caribbean to achieve Level 3 "Optimisation" in the Airport Carbon Accreditation program. The management and employees of Queen Beatrix Airport have demonstrated once again their leadership and commitment towards a sustainable aviation in-

dustry", were the words expressed by ACI-LAC's Director General, Rafael Echevarne.

AAA's Director Health, Safety and Sustainability, Angeline Flemming, indicated that "this achievement solidifies the efforts and commitment of our staff, airport community, partners, and stakeholders towards making AUA Airport the most sustainable airport in the region. This certification is part of the airport's long-term strategy, and we hope to encourage other organizations to also embrace sustainable practices in their daily operations and pursue certifications that contribute to a better more sustainable way of doing business."

Joost Meijs, CEO of AAA stated "as part of our sustainability goals and objectives, we aim to reach certain levels of certifications in the upcoming two years. ACA program provides a unique common framework and tool for airports to properly manage its carbon footprint and guide and support airports through the process of continual improvement and partnership with stakeholders. Reaching Level 3 shows the commitment of our staff and other partners to conduct business with respect to our environment."

About AUA Airport

AUA Airport is one of the busiest airports in the Caribbean region, with 22 different airlines operating into Aruba contributing to processing over 2.5 million passengers per year and providing air service to 22 cities and 34 non-stop destinations worldwide. AUA Airport's markets served comprise of 77% from the United States & Canada, 11% from Latin America, 7% from Europe, and 5% from Dutch Caribbean, year to date, January 2023. AUA Airport attributes this to the island's stable economic and political climate, hospitable and multilingual population, and safe environment. AUA Airport's aspiration is to become one of the most Sustainable, Safe, and Future Proof airport so the Latin America & Caribbean region, providing a trusted workplace, modern airport facilities and excellent customer service which reflects Aruban hospitality, contributing to a prosperous future for Aruba.

Learn more about what's happening at AUA Airport by visiting www.airport-aruba.com and connect with AUA Airport on Twitter, twitter.com/Aruba_Airport, Facebook, facebook.com/ArubaAirport, Instagram, instagram.com/arubaairport/ and LinkedIn, linkedin.com/ArubaAirport.

Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Margaret and Richard from Chicago, USA**. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

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The CBA maintained the reserve requirement rate at 25.5 percent as of February 1, 2023

In line with the Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) task to evaluate, determine, and provide transparency on the monetary policy actions of the Central Bank of Aruba (CBA), the CBA communicates the following.

During its meeting on January 13, 2023, the MPC decided to maintain the reserve requirement rate at 25.5 percent as of February 1, 2023. Accordingly, commercial banks must hold a minimum balance at the CBA equal to 25.5 percent of their clients' short-term deposits. The decision to maintain the reserve requirement rate at 25.5 percent was based on the steady decrease in the excess liquidity held at commercial banks, albeit at a lower pace, since July 2022. The CBA will continue to monitor the developments of excess liquidity in the coming months and stands ready to again change the reserve requirement rate, if deemed necessary.

The MPC considered the following information and analysis during its deliberations:

International and official reserves

The international reserves, comprising the official reserves of the CBA and foreign reserves held by the commercial banks, grew by Afl. 111.6 million as of December 30, 2022, compared to end-December

2021 (Graph 1). Official reserves expanded by Afl. 46.0 million, while the foreign reserves at the commercial banks widened by Afl. 65.6 million. Consequently, as of December 30, 2022, official and international reserves amounted to Afl. 2,790.9 million and Afl. 3,241.2 million, respectively.

Maintaining reserve adequacy is critical to keeping the fixed exchange rate between the Aruban florin and the US dollar. In this regard, international reserves remained comfortably above the minimum required three months of current account payments during 2022. Current account payments consist, among others, of import payments, interest payments made to investors, and foreign transfers such as money remittances by foreign workers. Official reserves also stayed within an adequate range when benchmarked against the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Assessing Reserve Adequacy (ARA) metric (Table 1).

Inflation

In November 2022, the End-of-Period (EOP) inflation rate fell from 7.0 percent in the previous month to 6.6 percent (Graph 2). The jump in the consumer price index (CPI) compared to the same month of the previous year was caused by higher utility prices, which affected the 'housing'

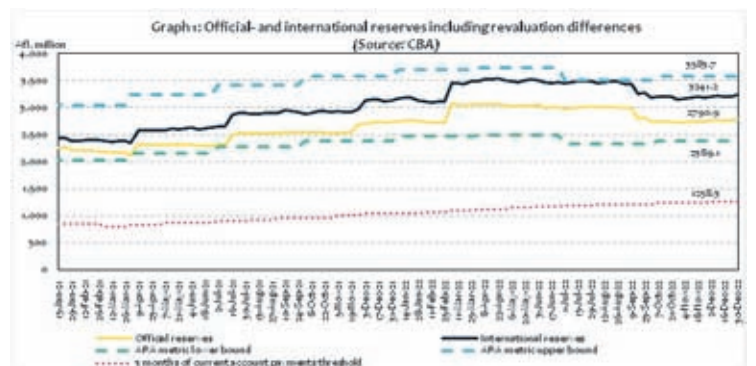
component (2.7 percentage points contribution). Moreover, gasoline prices surged, mainly impacting the 'transport' component (1.7 percentage points contribution), while prices in the 'food and non-alcoholic beverages' component also accelerated (1.4 percentage points contribution).

The 12-month average inflation rose to 5.3 percent, up from 5.1 percent in October 2022. The inflationary pressures were due to the elevated oil price in international markets, as well as the hikes in water and electricity tariffs as of August 2022. Furthermore, Aruba imported much of the soaring prices from its export partners, particularly the United States and Europe.

Meanwhile, in November 2022 EOP core inflation (excluding energy and food) reached 2.2 percent. On a twelve-month average basis, core inflation also amounted to 2.2 percent.

Commercial bank excess liquidity

Aggregated excess liquidity fell from Afl. 1,320.5 million in December 2021 to Afl. 796.9 million in Novem-



ber 2022 (Graph 3). This drop was principally due to consecutive hikes in the reserve requirement from January 2022 up to and including July 2022. Moreover, preliminary estimates based on weekly data for December 2022 showed a further contraction in excess liquidity. End December 2022, excess liquidity is estimated to have fallen to Afl. 787.8 million. Nev-

ertheless, excess liquidity remained above the pre-pandemic level of February 2020 (+Afl. 98.7 million), and higher than the level that the commercial banks may wish to hold as a safeguard. When excluding undischarged loan funds and other commitments excess liquidity still stood at an estimated Afl. 309.4 million in December 2022. □

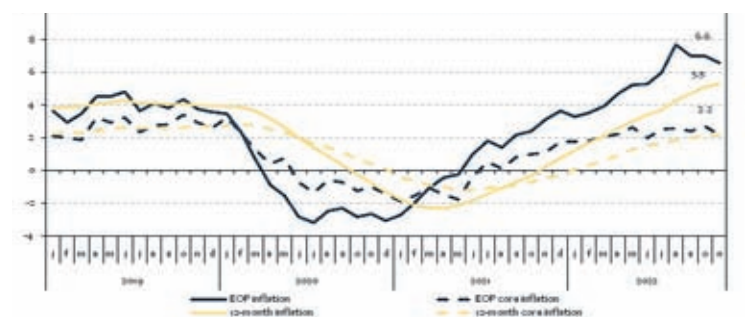


Table 1: Reserve benchmarks monitored in 2022

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Current account coverage ratio ¹	8.8	8.7	9.4	9.3	9.2	8.8	8.8	8.4	7.8	7.6	7.7	7.7
IMF ARA Metric ²	124.0	124.0	124.0	119.0	119.0	119.0	117.6	117.6	117.6	111.2	111.2	111.2

1 The number of months of current account payments covered by the international reserves.

2 The ratio between the level of official reserves and the minimum adequate level (following IMF), in percent.



Fresh fish right out of the Caribbean Sea to your plate

ORANJESTAD – Fish restaurants are everywhere, but do they serve fresh fish daily right out of the Caribbean Sea? The Grand Fish Restaurant does. This locally-owned restaurant is situated merely 5 minutes from the strip and is open as early as 11am for the lunch lovers.

The minute you step inside you can feel the homey and cozy warm ambiance by the décor and the friendly staff who will receive you with open arms.

The Grand Fish Restaurant has an extraordinary menu starting with appetizers, salads and their famous fish soup. The entree dishes consist of a variety of fresh fish like whole red snapper, fish steak, fish cake, grilled salmon, mixed seafood or seafood rice (paella local style) combined with sides of vegetables, french fries, rice, plantain, the island's traditional 'pan bati' (slapped bread) or funchi (cornmeal cake).

Each and every dish is made with passion, love and dedication. Yes... even the fried ones!

There are also pasta, meat and poultry options plus a kid-friendly menu with crispy chicken or fish nuggets, cheese burgers, mac & cheese and kid tenderloin.

Pair your meal with your favorite drink or cocktail, a wine of your choice or a glass of The Grand Fish yummy homemade fresh lemonade.

If you haven't visited The Grand Fish yet, check out our local page for a coupon for a free glass of wine and make sure to drop by. The staff will be happy to welcome, guide and serve you for an amazing casual bite and good time.

The Grand Fish Restaurant is situated at Taratata Road 15, unit #1.
Open from 11AM – 10PM from Wednesday till Monday
CLOSED on Tuesdays!!!



Prime Minister Wever-Croes enjoyed the cultural march in the streets of San Nicolas



(Oranjestad)—This past Thursday, in relation to Aruba's National Hymn and Flag Day celebrations this past weekend, a cultural march was organized in San Nicolas for the schools in the area.

Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes expressed that it was a beautiful march, where the children brought, in their own unique ways, different important aspects of our culture. "You can see that the children really lived and enjoyed the march.

I am grateful for the schools that have organized this event, all the teachers who have helped the children and all the parents that have also helped with the costumes. It was truly a magnificent march."

"If this doesn't put you in the mood to celebrate our National Hymn and Flag Day, seeing this march will for sure put you in the mood. A congratulation again and I look forwards for next year's march," she expressed. □

11-year-old Fabio Alexander fights for his dream of playing soccer for Real Madrid



(Oranjestad)—Fabio Alexander Montilla is an 11-year-old boy with a love for soccer. He currently plays for the local club RCA and Team Dreyer, with whom he recently to Colombia with to play in the Future Soccer Cup Tournament (FSC). In March, Fabio Alexander had the once in a lifetime opportunity to play in Madrid, Spain, in

the Real Madrid Foundation World Challenge Tournament 2023.

Last year, Alexander was a part of the Real Madrid Foundation Clinic that took place in Aruba. Through this, coupled with his talent, dedication, discipline and love for soccer, Alexander received an invitation to travel to Madrid and realize

the dream that a lot of kids, adults and soccer fanatics have: playing soccer in Madrid for the foundation of one of the biggest soccer club in the world, Real Madrid.

"I'm very happy that I received an invitation. It's going to be a once in a lifetime experience that I will never forget. I'm very



excited to play in Madrid and even meet some of the professional players, if I'm lucky," Alexander expressed.

To make this dream a reality, Alexander's parents has to cover the travel costs to Madrid. Bon Dia Aruba talked with Alexander's mother, Claudia Meriño, who explained more about the costs.

"It's a big sum, but we are working hard to make his dream come true. It's not cheap, we have to play for everything. They are offering a package that includes accommodation,

food, transport and a few tours, plus uniform and entry for the tournament for the plus one. However, even with all these things covered, it's still very expensive and we still have to pay for Alexander and his plus one's flight," Meriño explained.

The tournament will take place from March 31st to April 8th. If anyone is interest in contributing in Alexander's dream, Claudia is available through phone call at 7307325. "Any help or contribution, no matter how big or small, will be greatly appreciated," Meriño finalized. □

Aruba's underwater wonderland

ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken word war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an



area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Keyed up

1 Book makeup 42 Miser Marner

6 Hacienda houses 43 Pick from the menu

11 Island ring

12 Houston player

13 Baking need

15 Stop

16 Touch lightly

17 Cheering cry

18 Tyrants

20 Furious feeling

21 They hold power

22 Photo problem

23 Canary homes

26 Prolonged attack

27 Lofty poems

28 Knight's address

29 Rooster's mate

30 First aid kit item

34 Bullring cry

35 Convoy member

36 Fellows

37 Accountant's layout

40 "— all, folks!"

DOWN

1 Betrayed nervousness

2 Make amends

3 Merchandise

4 Caribou's cousin

5 Easy shoes

6 Play groups

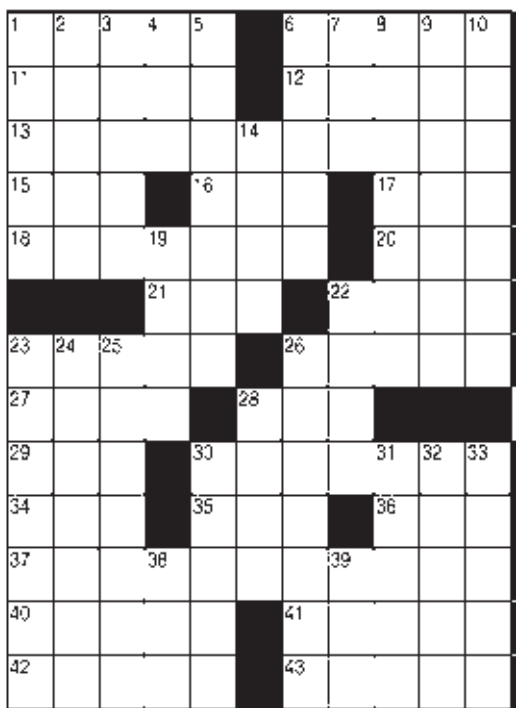
7 Cabinet wood

8 Like surgical tools

STRUT SPIT
THESE WANES
RESEE AWARE
ATE SUM LEE
WATCHSPRING
RON ONCE
ATBAT STEER
BEAN TOO
INNERSPRING
DUD EAR LOU
ERASE ATOLL
DENIS NAVAL
DATE OMENS

Yesterday's answer

9 Floor cover 26 Serenades
10 "Serves you right!" 28 Uttered
14 Puts away bigwigs 30 Army
19 Diner 31 Add a change to
desserts 32 Gaggles group
22 Robin or wren 33 Door sign
23 Kelly and Ryan, e.g. 38 Greek vowel
24 New York university 39 That woman
25 Army bigwig



3-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-21

CRYPTOQUOTE

CZ PD RWJ'U SGMED UGCJFE.

EWNDUCNDE UGD UGCJFE

ZWB BWPCJF IE SMJ SMUSG

IO. — B.N. NWJUFWNDQX

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS MORE DISCOURAGING, LITERATURE OR CHICKENS — ER WHITE



Hiring signs are displayed at a grocery store in Arlington Heights, Ill., Jan. 13, 2023.

Associated Press

Pay transparency is spreading. Here's what you need to know

By CORA LEWIS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. employers are increasingly posting salary ranges for job openings, even in states where it's not required by law, according to analysts with several major job search websites. Following new legislation in New York City, California, Washington, Colorado, and elsewhere, employers across the country are becoming more transparent about pay in order to stay competitive with companies in states that require employers to post salary ranges, experts say. A tight labor market and significant increase in remote work have also contributed to the rise. The number of U.S. job postings that include salary information more than doubled between February 2020 and February 2023, from 18.4% to 43.7%, according to a new report from job search site Indeed.

Salary visibility is lowest in the southern U.S., which

accounted for 18 of the 20 least transparent metro areas, and highest in the western part of the country, which tends to have more regulation.

Advocates say it's a trend that benefits women and people of color, who statistically fare less well in hiring negotiations.

Rather than placing the responsibility on the job-seeker or employee to determine how their pay compares to coworkers, and what fair compensation might be, the laws shift that expectation to the employer. Kate Bahn, chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, says that means employers have less of an upper hand in determining pay. □

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Anthony Fauci documentary on PBS covers a career of crises

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — There's a moment in the new PBS documentary about Dr. Anthony Fauci when a protestor holds up a hand-made sign reading, "Dr. Fauci, You Are Killing Us." It says something about Fauci that it's not initially clear when that sign was waved in anger — in the 1980s as AIDS made its deadly rise or in the 2020s with COVID-19 vaccine opponents.

"American Masters: Dr. Tony Fauci," offers a portrait of an unlikely lightning rod: A government infectious disease scientist who advised seven presidents. Fauci hopes it can inspire more public servants like him. "I just felt that there needed to be a story of people understanding what public health officials go through, but also I hope as a source of inspiration for young people who are either in science or interested in going into science," he told The Associated Press. The documentary airs Tuesday and later streams.

Fauci allowed a film crew to follow him for 23 months starting in January 2021. The documentary covers his career and its crises, especially the way COVID-19 was handled by the Trump administration.

"When you talk about all of the different things coming together for a disaster, that's what happened: A



This image released by PBS shows Dr. Anthony Fauci in a scene from the documentary "American Masters: Dr. Tony Fauci," premiering nationwide on PBS, Tuesday, March 21.

Associated Press

divided country, a president who amplified the division and then a public health crisis you couldn't ask for a worse combination of things," he said.

Director Mark Mannucci offers an intimate look at his subject, with images of Fauci running from meeting to meeting and wolfing down Wheat Thins between Zooms. His wife attests to the stress by pointing out their security detail due to threats.

"The story illuminates and he'd be the first to say it some very dark stuff about this country and how a person who has devoted his life to helping individuals got so twisted in this current

climate," said Mannucci. Michael Kantor, executive producer for the American Masters series, says Fauci is a figure who has been central to American life for decades and deserves an examination, even if some virulently oppose him.

"Dr. Fauci is a very controversial figure, and there are going to be people who are going to voice just as in the film great displeasure about what he's done and about his approach to things. But isn't that the whole point of public media? It is intended to make that conversation happen in the best possible way."

COVID-19 may have introduced Fauci to millions

of Americans, but his long career at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases was marked by numerous previous health scares, among them HIV, SARS, MERS, Ebola and even the nation's 2001 anthrax attacks.

The film shows that Fauci learned a lesson in humility with AIDS, as the disease stubbornly persisted and activists argued not enough was being done from the government. "I went from a world of success and gratification to a world of frustration and failure," he says in the film.

Mannucci's camera flashes-forward to today, with Fauci cordially meeting up

with the former AIDS activists who once decried him. They have long since reconciled; they were all on the same side, after all — science.

"I put aside the confrontational behavior and the attacks on me and listen to what they were saying," Fauci explained in the interview. "And what they were saying was making perfect sense. It made me feel if I were in their shoes, I'd be doing exactly what they were doing."

That's not the case when protestors in recent years began attacking Fauci for mask mandates, school closures, quarantines and bizarre claims about the COVID-19 vaccines.

"There's one sign that says, 'Fauci, You're Killing Us' and the other sign that says 'Fauci, You're Killing Us' but the rationale for those from the 1980s to 2023 is enormously different," Fauci said. "They couldn't be more different."

In one remarkable sequence in the documentary, Mannucci presses Fauci on whether he might have handled things differently looking back like asking Americans to adopt masks sooner or ordering quarantines faster. Mannucci relied on 10 long sit-downs with Fauci to develop trust with his subject and didn't clutter the documentary with testimonials from talking heads, wanting to focus on Fauci's experiences. □

Bidens to host 'Ted Lasso' cast to promote mental health



Brett Goldstein, from left, Toheeb Jimoh, Hannah Waddingham, Jason Sudeikis and Brendan Hunt, all members of the cast of "Ted Lasso," pose for a portrait at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles on March 6, 2023.

Associated Press

By **ZEKE MILLER and DARLENE SUPERVILLE**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden will host the cast of the TV series "Ted Lasso" at the White House on Monday to promote mental health and well-being. Jason Sudeikis, who plays the title character an American coaching a soccer team in London and other members of the cast will meet with the Bidens "to discuss the importance

of addressing your mental health to promote overall wellbeing," the White House said.

The third season of the Emmy-winning, feel-good Apple TV+ series began streaming last week.

A White House official said the Bidens have seen some of the show and are familiar with its "message of positivity, hope, kindness, and empathy." Cast members expected to be in attendance include: Hannah Waddingham, Jeremy

Swift, Phil Dunster, Brett Goldstein, Brendan Hunt, Toheeb Jimoh, Cristo Fernandez, Kola Bokinni, Billy Harris, and James Lance.

Biden has previously called on lawmakers in both parties to expand resources to fight the "mental health crisis" in the nation as part of his "unity agenda."

His administration has surged funding to bolster the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and expand school-based mental health professionals. □

Ja Morant ready to rejoin Grizzlies, NBA suspension over

By **TERESA M. WALKER**
AP Sports Writer

Ja Morant's eight-game NBA suspension is over, and the two-time All-Star guard may rejoin the Memphis Grizzlies.

He is expected on the bench Monday night when Memphis hosts Dallas, though it's unclear exactly when he'll play, with the earliest being Wednesday. The Grizzlies announced Sunday that Morant would not play against the Mavericks because of a "Return to Competition Reconditioning."

The Grizzlies know Morant has been working out, trying to be ready for this moment. Memphis was off Sunday after back-to-back wins, and coach Taylor Jenkins said he would like Morant to practice or at least participate in a shootaround before seeing game action.

"We'll see when he gets back in the team environment," Jenkins said Saturday night before the Grizzlies beat Golden State 133-119. "Our anticipation is he's at least out for Monday. We'll cross the bridge on Wednesday as we get a little bit closer."

The Grizzlies host Houston on Wednesday in the first of two consecutive games against the Rockets in Memphis.

Memphis went 5-3 without Morant, who first stepped



Memphis Grizzlies guard Ja Morant (12) plays in the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday, March 3, 2023, in Denver.

Associated Press

away from the team March 4, hours after he livestreamed himself on Instagram displaying a gun at strip club in Colorado following a game against the Denver Nuggets. The Grizzlies said on March 8 that Morant would be sidelined for four more games.

Morant met with NBA Commissioner Adam Silver in New York before the NBA announced his suspension on March 15, including six games he already had missed.

The league investigation found that Morant was

"holding a firearm in an intoxicated state" but did not prove the gun was owned by Morant "or was displayed by him beyond a brief period." The NBA also did not find that Morant had the gun with him on Memphis' flight to Denver, or that he possessed the gun in any NBA facility. Police in Colorado conducted their own investigation and concluded there was no reason to charge Morant with a crime after looking into the circumstances surrounding the video.

Morant said in an ESPN interview on March 15 that the gun was not his and that he takes full responsibility for his actions.

But the strip club incident wasn't Morant's first eyebrow-raising move. The Grizzlies had been talking with Morant about his off-court conduct even before the March 4 incident.

"I can see the image that I painted over myself with my recent mistakes," Morant told ESPN. "But in the future, I'm going to show everybody who Ja really is, what I'm about and

change this narrative that everybody got."

Morant, whose suspension cost him \$669,000 in salary and possibly a chance to max out the five-year contract he signed last July by making the All-NBA team, also has to keep working on himself away from basketball.

Morant said he underwent counseling during his suspension.

"He'd probably be the first one to tell you: 'Nothing is going to change immediately overnight. I'm going to learn and grow, but I'm going to get the skills and methods to do that both personally and professionally,'" Jenkins said.

On the court, the Grizzlies are pleased with the growth of the 23-year-old Morant. After Memphis selected him with the No. 2 draft pick in 2019, he was named the 2020 NBA Rookie of the Year and last year earned NBA Most Improved Player honors.

He still ranks ninth in the league averaging 27.1 points and has six triple-doubles this season.

He rejoins a Memphis team in the middle of a competitive postseason race. The Grizzlies, who were second in the Western Conference before the March 4 incident, are tied with Sacramento — four games back of West-leading Denver with 12 games remaining. □

Alcaraz at No. 1; Nadal out of top 10, 1st time in 18 years

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. (AP) — Carlos Alcaraz returned to No. 1 in the ATP rankings on Monday, replacing Novak Djokovic, and Rafael Nadal dropped out of the top 10 for the first time in 18 years.

Alcaraz rose one spot, swapping places with Djokovic, a day after ending Daniil Medvedev's 19-match winning streak by beating him in straight sets in the final at Indian Wells, California. Alcaraz, a 19-year-old from Spain who first ascended to No. 1 by winning the U.S. Open in September, didn't drop

a set in the hard-court tournament.

Djokovic has spent more weeks at No. 1 than any man or woman in tennis history. He did not play in Indian Wells because he is not allowed to enter the United States as a foreign citizen who is not vaccinated against COVID-19. He also will miss the Miami Open that begins this week; Alcaraz is the defending champion there.

Nadal has been sidelined since January by an injured hip flexor and he slipped four spots to No. 13 on Monday, ending a stay in the

top 10 that began in April 2005. It is the longest such run in the ATP; Jimmy Connors is next on the list with about 15 years.

Djokovic and Nadal currently share the men's record of 22 Grand Slam singles titles.

Elena Rybakina's straight-set victory over Aryna Sabalenka for the Indian Wells trophy pushed Rybakina up three spots to a career-high No. 7 in the WTA rankings. Iga Swiatek remained at No. 1, followed by Sabalenka, who defeated Rybakina in the Australian Open final in January. □



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, celebrates after defeating Daniil Medvedev, of Russia, in the men's singles final at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament Sunday, March 19, 2023, in Indian Wells, Calif.

Associated Press

The maddest March ever? Underdogs head to the Sweet 16

By **JOHN MARSHALL**
AP Basketball Writer

We know you're upset. Underdogs have blown up every bracket in the country. An upside of the upsets: perhaps the maddest March ever.

Defending national champion Kansas and fellow No. 1 seed Purdue are gone the Boilermakers with a slice of unwanted history. The Sweet 16 won't have blue bloods Kentucky, Duke or North Carolina for only the second time since 1979.

In are upstarts like Princeton, Florida Atlantic and a team picked to finish last in the Big 12 Conference.

And, this being March, of course there's Tom Izzo.

The bracket has been nearly devoid of the buzzer-beaters that college hoops fans have been accustomed to, but the games have been close. There have been four games decided by one point, the most since there were six in 2017 and three short of the record last matched in 1998.

SOUTH REGION

Alabama has looked every bit the No. 1 overall seed, blowing out Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and Maryland despite turmoil swirling around the program.

Waiting for Alabama in Louisville, Kentucky, will be



The Florida Atlantic bench celebrates in the second half of a second-round college basketball game against Fairleigh Dickinson in the men's NCAA Tournament in Columbus, Ohio, Sunday, March 19, 2023. Florida Atlantic defeated Fairleigh Dickinson 78-70.

Associated Press

San Diego State. The fifth-seeded Aztecs are old and love to knock around opponents just ask College of Charleston and Furman.

The second game marks Princeton's first Sweet 16 in 56 years. The No. 15 seed Tigers had the first major March upset by knocking off No. 2 Arizona and proved it was no fluke by taking down Missouri.

They face Creighton, one of three Big East teams to get this far. Inconsistent early, the bombing Bluejays and big man Ryan Kalk-

brenner are in the Sweet 16 for the second time in three seasons after bouncing No. 3 seed Baylor.

EAST REGION

Florida Atlantic won the battle of bracket darlings by knocking off Fairleigh Dickinson, the second No. 16 seed ever to beat a No. 1, taking down Purdue.

The Owls better be ready for some bruises against Tennessee at Madison Square Garden in their first Sweet 16. The third-seeded Vols bullied their way through the first two rounds,

pushing around Duke after grinding out a win over Louisiana.

Sharing the Garden marquee will be Michigan State and Kansas State.

The Spartans are at their best in March under coach Izzo, who won his record 16th NCAA Tournament game as a lower seed by bouncing No. 2 seed Marquette.

Jerome Tang is taking underdog Kansas State from one Manhattan to another in his first season in the Little Apple.

Picked last in the Big 12, the Wildcats and under-sized but undeterred guard Markquis Nowell shoved aside Montana State and wore down Kentucky for their first Sweet 16 since 2018.

MIDWEST REGION

Tang said the Wildcats won because they've "got dudes." Houston has a few of its own.

The Midwest's No. 1 seed, the Cougars have played the lockdown defense that made them a Final Four favorite at the start of the season, holding Northern Kentucky to 52 points and Auburn to 64.

The Cougars' bid to play the Final Four at home now heads to Kansas City, Missouri, where they will face Miami.

The speedy, fifth-seeded Hurricanes hit Indiana with a gale force of offensive rebounds, scoring 29 second-chance points to reach the Sweet 16 for the second straight season under Jim Larrañaga.

Another Texas team is still in the mix to reach the Final Four in its home state the one from Austin.

No. 2 seed Texas overcame the midseason firing of coach Chris Beard to play some outstanding basketball under interim coach Rodney Terry. □

Shiffrin tops season-record \$1M in ski World Cup prize money



Switzerland's Marco Odermatt, left, and United States' Mikaela Shiffrin celebrate on the podium with their alpine ski, World Cup overall leader's trophies, in Soldeu, Andorra, Sunday, March 19, 2023.

Associated Press

OBERHOFEN, Switzerland (AP) — Mikaela Shiffrin earned another piece of World Cup history the first Alpine skier with \$1 million to top the season-ending race prize money list confirmed Monday.

Shiffrin's win in a giant slalom Sunday was her 13th World Cup victory since October and lifted her total prize money total race organizers to 964,200 Swiss francs (\$1.04 million).

That set the all-time Alpine World Cup record and moved her earnings above Marco Odermatt, whose giant slalom win Saturday in his last race of the sea-

son set a men's record with 941,200 Swiss francs (\$1,017,000).

Shiffrin's previous best prize total was 886,000 Swiss francs (\$958,000) in the 2018-19 season, when she also won the women's overall World Cup title. She won her fifth title this season. Her historic World Cup season ends with the 28-year-old American extending her all-time career wins total to 88 and setting a new women's career mark of 21 giant slalom wins.

Her prize money total was almost three times more than the next highest earning woman, Sofia Goggia,

whose 338,000 Swiss francs (\$365,000) was boosted by five wins in downhill.

After Odermatt, the next best men's earner with 623,000 Swiss francs (\$673,000) was Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, Shiffrin's partner. Kilde's eight World Cup race wins included the most lucrative race of the season, a downhill at Kitzbuehel, Austria. It pays 100,000 euros (\$107,000) to the winner. Odermatt's total topped the previous men's record of 670,000 Swiss francs (\$724,000) set by Marcel Hirscher in his overall title-winning season of 2017-18. □